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ABSTRACT

This study examined how preservice teachers in a large southwestern university experience multiculturalism which has been infused across the professional studies curriculum. The university is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) which requires that accredited institutions address the issue of cultural diversity in the professional studies courses. Five students (four Anglo and one Mexican-American) who were in the Early Childhood block program were interviewed and observed; textbooks, syllabi, and class notes were examined. Classes observed included Language Arts, Classroom Organization and Management, Principles and Applications of Effective Instruction, and Computer Applications. Findings indicated that students were hearing issues and concerns rather than specific content or skills such as how to modify curriculum or teaching styles. Information was fragmented and was not being included in assessments or evaluations. Generally, language issues were addressed, with some minor references to ethnicity and cultural effects. There appeared to be a relationship between students' specific coursework in multicultural education and the ability to notice or "hear" multiculturalism in other courses. The paper concludes that there is a lack of parallelism between the ideal and formal levels of multiculturalism and the experiential level of curriculum as it relates to multiculturalism in the professional studies courses. (Contains 13 references.) (JDD)

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Multiculturalism in the Professional Studies ... Or Pardon Me I Believe Your Values May Be Showing

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Running Head: Multicultural Values

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA, 1993

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Abstract

This is a report of a pilot study that focused on the infusion of multiculturalism in the professional studies component of a teacher education program. The overall guiding research question in this study was, how does a preservice teacher experience multiculturalism that has been infused across the curriculum? More specifically, what is the student hearing in her classes that reflects a commitment to cultural pluralism, and which specific issues are being addressed? A qualitative interpretivist framework was employed to design the study and analyze the data. The findings were that students were hearing issues and concerns rather than specific content or skills such as how to modify curriculum or teaching styles. Generally language issues were addressed with some minor references to ethnicity and cultural effects. Students who had completed a course in multicultural education were more apt to being hearing multicultural issues than the one who had not. Finally, information was presented to students in a fragmented manner and was not being included in assessments or evaluations. This final finding raises the questions of values in multicultural infusion.

Introduction

For the past several years, the themes of multiculturalism and diversity have been very popular at teacher education conferences. Indeed, just this past year ATE, AACTE and ASCD have all addressed diversity in the classroom as a major focus of conferences. In the process, new buzzwords have been created; among them is the word infusion. Infusion reflects a commitment to the philosophy of education that is multicultural (Grant, 1978) rather than multicultural education. It calls for a curriculum in a teacher education program where diversity is addressed, not solely in a class on multicultural education, but rather it permeates every component -- general studies, professional studies and field placement.

Several studies have examined the effects of addressing diversity in the field placement component of teacher education. Little or no published research exists which addresses infusion of multiculturalism in the other two areas except for research on specific courses in multicultural education. Given that the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has required since 1979 that institutions seeking accreditation must give evidence of addressing cultural diversity in the professional studies' courses, this is quite surprising.

This pilot study, which took place during the Spring of 1992 at a large Southwestern university, focuses on infusion of multiculturalism in the professional studies component of a teacher education program. It examines the infusion from the viewpoint of the students. How does a preservice teacher experience multiculturalism that has been infused across the curriculum in their coursework?

A Curricular Conceptual Framework

Defining curriculum is no easier a task than defining multicultural education. Although a dictionary might define curriculum as a fixed series of studies required for graduation from a particular institution, or all the courses, collectively offered at an institution, curriculum theorists do not all agree on

the finer points of this definition. Some would say it is an organized set of intended learning outcomes leading to the achievement of educational goals; others argue that it is everything that happens in school (Messick and Reynolds, 1992).

John Goodlad (1977) proposes five separate conceptual levels of curriculum. First, there is the ideal curriculum, which is that which a group of theorists, researchers, agencies or interest groups proposes as being desirable. The next level is the formal curriculum, which consists of the proposals of governing bodies, either state departments of education or on the tertiary level, the colleges of education. Next on Goodlad's list is the perceived curriculum. This would be what the teachers understand the mandated formal curriculum to be. The operational level of the curriculum is what the teacher then attempts to teach in the classroom. Finally, there is the experiential curriculum. This is what students perceive is being offered to them and to which they relate. In Goodlad's (1984) large scale study of schools a lack of parallelism between what other goal statements convey and what his team of researchers observed (p.235-236) was found.

I believe that this model relates well to multicultural education. All five levels of Goodlad's model of curriculum can be seen in seen in colleges of education which either have or are seeking accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

The ideal curriculum is that education that is multicultural is the desired goal. Carl Grant (1978) has explained that the expression Education That is Multicultural means that the entire education program is redesigned to reflect the concerns of diverse cultural groups. Rather than being one of several kinds of education, it is a different orientation toward the whole education process. NCATE requires that institutions desiring accreditation "incorporate multicultural and global perspectives" in the curriculum for professional studies (NCATE, 1990 p.48). Also included in the ideal curriculum is the

state mandates for multiculturalism in teacher education. At last count twenty-one states have multicultural requirements (Mitchell, 1988).

The formal curriculum would be the curriculum guidelines set by the individual colleges of education. This would be reflected in the mission statement and the list of required coursework for institutional endorsement. Included would be the general studies' requirements, the professional study's component and the field placement experience.

The perceived curriculum and the experiential curriculum are both dependent on the professors within the college of education. The first would be the way professors perceive the ideal and formal curricula. The textbooks they choose along with the goal statements in their syllabi would reflect their perceptions. What is openly said and taught in the classroom would be the experiential curriculum.

Finally, the experiential curriculum is what the students derive from the operational level. It involves what they actually experience in the teacher education program.

Definition of Multiculturalism and Multicultural Issues

Very important in any study is a definition of terms. This is especially true in Multicultural Education where there are multiple conceptions and definitions of multiculturalism. Equally important is to delimit what constitutes a multicultural issue.

Multiculturalism in this study is synonymous with the term democratic cultural pluralism as defined by James Lynch (1986). It is a "... commitment to the existence of different legitimate cultural groups as legally sanctioned entities that maintain some separate structures and some structures held in common with all other groups in society" (Lynch, 1986, p.15). Particular attention is paid to groups who have previously or presently are subject to oppression or whose histories and contributions have been ignored.

Because of the lack of empirical research in the area of the effects of infusion of multiculturalism into teacher education, broadest possible lens was chosen in defining what constituted multicultural content and issues. Taking from the definition of Gollnick and Chinn (1990), the following socially constructed categories constituted multicultural content and issues: race and ethnicity, social class, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, and exceptionality. In choosing such a lens, it allowed the maximum amount of data to be collected. Content was considered to be the teaching of specific skills, modification of existing practices, and actual cultural knowledge. Issues would be more on an awareness level -- i.e., race, class and gender may have an impact on a student's performance or behavior.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the infusion of multicultural education in the content areas, known as the professional studies, on the experiential level, or in other words, from a student's point of view. How do students in a teacher education program of an NCATE-accredited institution experience multicultural education that had been infused in the professional studies' courses? What are students hearing in their classes that reflect a commitment of cultural pluralism? What cultural issues are being addressed in the classes outside of a specific course in multicultural education in the professional development classes?

Methods and Procedures

Interpretive methods based on techniques described by Erickson (1986) were used to address the research questions. Multiple research techniques including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document review were employed to gather data. The data were searched for recurrent patterns and themes that, taken together, portrayed the experience of students in classes in the professional studies' component of a teacher education program.

One student was chosen as the unit of study. Debby, a second semester student in the teacher education program was approached and asked if she would consider participating in the study. It was explained that the purpose of the study was to attempt to hear what a student was hearing and experiencing in their classes in the block program. Her participation would entail several semi-structured interviews and allowing the researcher to follow her schedule for four weeks. Also her textbooks, syllabi and notes would be examined. After some initial questioning, she agreed. After one week of observation, it was noted that four other students were in the same four classes. All four consented to being interviewed and sharing their notes taken during the time observed. Their participation strengthened the study as it provided another source of data. All students were interviewed at least twice.

The analytic process used was an iterative one in which preliminary conclusions were fed back to participants for confirmation: "I noticed that .... What led you to feel that ....? Professors were each interviewed once after the observations were completed. During the observations, the role of the observer was more observer than participant, however it varied from class to class.

After the student agreed to participate, permission was obtained by all of her professors to observe in their classes. Again it was explained that the purpose of the study was to examine the a student's experience in the block program. Since the focus of the study was a student, the choice of instructors was secondary.

Student definitions of multicultural content and issues differed. Initially students were asked what their definitions were. When in Debby's case the response was "Race," questions that probed her definition of that term were asked. The questioning that followed then reflected the definition used by the researcher: What about gender issues? Social class? Language issues? Religion? Exceptionality?

Background and Description of Participants

Site

The study took place at a college of education in a large Southwestern university located in an urban area rich in cultural diversity. The College of Education has over 1200 students enrolled in the undergraduate teacher education program and 1000 students in a post-baccalaureate program. Students can become certified to teach Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Special Education, and Bilingual Education. .

The formal curriculum is similar to that found by John Goodlad (1990) and associates in most colleges of education in their study of Teachers for Our Nation's Schools. The teacher preparation program is four semesters long. It is known as the block program. Block 1, 2, and 3 are a combination of professional studies' classes and field placements. The professional studies include courses in foundations, educational psychology, media and technology and teaching methods. Block 4 is student teaching.

At the time the study took place, the university was in the process of preparing for a renewal of NCATE accreditation. It had been NCATE accreditated for approximately 30-40 years. Commitment to cultural diversity was present in both the mission statements of the College of Education and the Division of Curriculum and Instruction. Infusion of multiculturalism could be seen in course syllabi for coursework in the professional studies component and in the field placement requirements.

Students

All five students were enrolled in the Early Childhood block program. The students were all women and ranged in age from 20 to 29. Five of the students were Anglo and one was Mexican-American. The gender, racial identity, and SES of the four Anglo student volunteers in this

study make them typical of students in a teacher education program. The Mexican-American student, Susan, was fairly acculturated into the mainstream culture being third generation to the area. Only two of the Anglo students, Debby and Brooke, were native to the area. Susan, Debby, and Brooke all attended parochial elementary schools and spent part or all of their time in public high schools. The remaining two students completed most, or all of their schooling in other states. Lisa had moved from New York when she was in high school. Even though she was half Jewish, she also attended all parochial schools. The fifth student, Barbara, was born in Michigan and lived there and attended all public schools including university until she moved to the Southwest with her husband three years ago. She was the oldest in the group and was also in the urban core.

Two of the Anglo students and the Mexican-American student expressed a desire to teach in urban schools. All three sought field placements in inner city schools and planned to teach there. Despite their desire to work in school districts where there were a large number of linguistically diverse students, none were fluent in a second language. All three were attempting to learn Spanish.

The most fluent Spanish speaker was one of the natives in the group. She was the student who most wanted to teach in an upper middle-class school district. Originally, she had considered going into bilingual education. However, having had a bad experience in an urban school bilingual placement, she wanted to teach in an area where "the students are like me."

The other student was best friends with the Mexican-American student in the cohort. They were nearly inseparable while on campus. Unlike Susan however, she sought placement in a suburban school district where there was some diversity -- mainly Native American students from a nearby reservation and Asian-American students. She desired to stay in this district for student teaching, and felt that to take a

field placement in an urban school would jeopardize her chances of being chosen to do her field placement in that district.

Professors and Graduate Students

The four instructors participating in the study reflected the university's commitment to diversity. Two were assistant professors. Alicia, was a Mexican-American woman and Steve, was a European-American Jewish male. Both were in their forties and had been teaching at the university level for several years. The other two instructors were doctoral students. Eileen was a European-American woman in her fifties. The other was Paul, Japanese-American male in his thirties. Both had taught their respective courses for at least two semesters.

The Classes Observed

All four classes in the "block" were typical of courses found in teacher preparation programs across the country (see Goodlad, 1990). The smallest class was the Language Arts class taught by Alicia. There were 26 students in the class. It was a two credit course that met twice a week. Also a two credit course, the next larger class was entitled Classroom Organization and Management. There were approximately 37 students in the class and it met in two one-hour sessions. Principles and Applications of Effective Instruction had 65 students and met two days a week for a total of three hours. The last class observed was the largest with more than 150 students. It was a one-credit course entitled Computer Applications.

Discussions of Findings

Cultural Issues Addressed

During the month of observation, multicultural issues did come up in several of the classes observed. Only one class was completely devoid of any multicultural content or references in the

lectures. It was the course in Computer Applications taught by Eileen. Multiculturalism was not mentioned in the syllabus and there were no textbooks to examine. During the interview after the period of observation, Eileen stated that she was not aware that multicultural education was to be integrated across the curriculum. The other three classes, however did include references to cultural issues, albeit in differing amounts.

In Steve's class, the few references to cultural issues were embedded in very deep philosophical lectures, such as one on Buber, which included these two statements:, "Education is frequently seen in the predominate paradigm as a transmission of cultural values," and "We must see people as products of cultural experiences. You must look at all of your students as new, unique...as possibilities."

A check of students' notebooks, revealed that none of them had recorded either of these two statements. When interviewed after the observations about the content of the lectures, no student remembered hearing any cultural issues raised in that class.

Paul did not address multicultural issues or content in his own lectures during the month-long observation period. However, he did have a guest speaker who did. Terry Martin, was a dynamic speaker. He was introduced as a kindergarten teacher, who had previously taught at the university and was presently working for a government agency evaluating Head Start programs across the country. Paul admonished his students to ask Terry questions about the multicultural aspects of early childhood education along with questions about classroom management. Rather than deliver a prepared speech, Terry chose to start with the students' questions. Initially the students asked questions about Terry's philosophy about discipline. Terry answered, "I feel discipline problems come from curriculum problems. Teachers need to look at how their students interact, draw floor plans for high traffic areas. A teacher must work at knowing their students individually and then design a personalized curriculum." As time

progressed, more questions were asked about Terry's current work. When asked about bilingual education, Terry answered enthusiastically,

> Absolutely! We've done a tremendous disservice to Native Americans in insisting that they learn in English. It's an interglobal world. We need more bilingual people in this country... and just as important is multicultural education. All people must be represented in the textbooks. The American Indians believe we are entering the seventh generation. The whole world is going to change. Multiculturalism is the wave of the future.

When questioned later, Paul admitted that he personally was not comfortable discussing cultural issues with his students. He had a bad experience as an undergraduate in a Black Studies course and decided to "steer clear of those types of issues." The two textbooks chosen for this class did not contain any reference to multiculturalism.

Debby remembered hearing cultural issues brought up in Terry's presentation but could not state anything specific that she learned. Barbara responded, "Wasn't he great!" When questioned about what she remembered specifically about the presentation, she answered, "He talked about his work with the reservations and personalizing curriculum."

The class that most specifically addressed cultural issues was the Language Arts class. In this class during two class periods observed, Alicia lectured on emerging literacy. At one point she encouraged students to think back about their own literacy and how it developed. After some initial prodding, students recalled writing names, signing birthday cards, writing letters to Santa. Alicia went on to say that her experience was a lot like theirs, however, "All my notes were written in Spanish." She used examples of the writing of bilingual children to demonstrate emerging literacy. The writing was almost exclusively done in Spanish. She translated or encouraged those students in the class who were capable of translating to do so.

Influence of a Course in Multicultural Education

The way a student experienced multicultural infusion in their classes in the block before this study appeared to be related to their experience with multicultural education. When asked what she had learned in her classes thus far that addressed the teaching of children from different cultures, Debby, who had not had any specific coursework in multicultural education nervously gave the quick response, "Nothing." When probed for an explanation, she added:

> No, not yet...I know there are some classes I have to take...I'm planning to take them this summer or next fall. There is a class called the culturally diverse child and another for special education. I'm not sure what else...but no, so far I haven't had anything at all.

On the other hand, Barbara, a student who was enrolled in a class in multicultural education at the time of the study, was acutely aware of cultural content in her classes. When asked the same question, she automatically started listing her classes and what she learned.

> In Dr. _____'s Human Development class, we heard about cultural issues all the time. She made us almost overly aware. She would cite studies and would always say "this Anglo girl or this African-American boy." Somebody one time said, "The Blacks did this," and she had a fit. So I'm very aware of it whenever I hear it, because she said, "You say the Black person, the Black American ... you don't say the Blacks...or the Whites. They are people, not things." I learned that really fast.

She continued:

> ...You can't treat all the students the same and expect them to jump in and blend in to however you are teaching. The big thing is learning styles...there are different styles. It isn't necessarily related to ethnicity. You can't say that all Mexican-Americans learn one way and all Anglos learn another...but a lot of times it may be related.

The other three students all had taken a course in multicultural education before entering the Block program. They also agreed that cultural issues were being addressed in classes but not to the extent that Barbara was noticing:

> In some classes we'll have maybe a section or a chapter in the book. We don't even discuss it. It isn't anything....If the professor discusses it is very brief.

Another offered:

> In Dr._____'s class we had to do a whole lot of little projects. One looked at gender issues. Another one I think dealt with culture. I don't remember exactly. In my group discussion with the TA we discussed it once for 15-20 minutes. It wasn't anything new. It was something that was attached to the curriculum.

And finally:

> Some professors mention things...like I learned not to be surprised if a Native American child doesn't look me in the eyes. But I can't say I've heard a lot...except for that multicultural class.

The findings here reflect the literature on the effects of multicultural education classes on attitudes and awareness. Bennett (1988) found that a multicultural class had an initial positive impact on students' attitudes and knowledge. The gains were lost a year later. Here we see that the student who was most aware of and enthusiastic about discussing multicultural issues was the women who were presently enrolled in the multicultural class. The three other students who had taken the class a year earlier, were comfortable discussing multicultural issues and could identify them. However they did not notice it being addressed in their classes as acutely as did Barbara. Debbie, on the other hand was hearing nothing. A review of her notes revealed nothing that she had taken no notes reflecting any of the multicultural issues or content raised in the classes observed.

Although this is a small data set, it raises several questions about a course in multicultural education. Some, such as people who advocate education that is multicultural would question having a separate course in multicultural education, because it renders multicultural education as a one of several different types of education (Grant, 1978). The student in this study who had not had any of this type of coursework, was extremely nervous, discussing cultural issues and was not noticing infusion as it was occurring. All the other students were not as threatened and were hearing infused issues and content in varying degrees.

It appears that participation in a class specifically directed at multicultural issues and content had a positive effect on these particular students. Perhaps it gave the students a higher confidence level when discussing issues of multiculturalism. It gave them a wider definition of multiculturalism, along with the vocabulary necessary to hear and identify issues when they were raised.

An Aspect of the Hidden Curriculum

With perhaps one or two exceptions, when multiculturalism was addressed in classes, it was issues only. No specific skills or approaches other than those relating to language development and the call for bilingual education were mentioned. There did not seem to be a unified effort to infuse. Instead the approach appeared to be piecemeal, with fragmented bits of cultural awareness issues integrated into existing coursework. A similar finding was reported by Grant and Sleeter (1986) in their study of a junior high school in the Midwest in the mid 1980s.

When asked why she thought that she wasn't hearing cultural issues raised in her classes, Debby offered the following insight:

> I don't think it is so much that I want to ignore it. I think it is that when I take a class, I'm paying attention on getting good grades. I'm listening to what I need to know to do to do that. I think that when stuff like that comes up, I might just miss it because it is not a major part of the class.

Lisa and Susan brought up a similar point earlier:

> In some classes we'll have maybe a section or a chapter in the book. We don't even discuss it. It isn't anything. If the professor discusses it is very brief.
>
> We never get tested on multicultural knowledge. Some professors might have a 15 minute discussion about something multicultural but we don't need to know it for the test.

Whether we are teachers giving routine exams in our classrooms or policy-makers mandating achievement tests, through assessment we set and communicate standards to those around us: we tell them what is important, what deserves focus, and what we expect as good performance (Herman, Aschenbacher and Winters, 1992). Furthermore, we not only communicate to students what's important

by including it in our assessments, we are motivating students to learn it. Significant stakes are often associated with test results, such as grades, admission to programs, and certification. Thus assessment also motivates performance.

What message are we giving students when we make efforts to infuse and not assess multicultural content and issues? Is infusion to be nothing more than lip service to a mandated requirement?

Summary of Findings

Looking back at the original research questions, it is perhaps easiest to answer them in the reverse of their original order in which they were asked.

First, what cultural issues are being addressed in classes other than a class in multicultural education? In this study, almost exclusively language issues were observed being addressed with minor references made to ethnicity and cultural effects in general. Students reported hearing gender issues and racial and ethnic issues raised occasionally in classes they had previously attended. Class, religion and exceptionality issues were not reported as being addressed.

Second, what are students hearing in their classes that reflects a commitment to cultural pluralism? Obviously different students are hearing different things. However there appears to be a possible relationship between specific coursework in multicultural education and the abilities to notice or "hear" multiculturalism in other courses. Students who had or are having a course in multicultural education are noticing references to multiculturalism in their other courses. The student who had not had any courses in multicultural education, was hearing nothing.

Another finding not directly related to the second question was that students who had taken a course in multicultural education were more at ease about discussing cultural issues than the student who did not have that particular course.

Finally, how do students experience multicultural education in a teacher education program where it has been infused across the professional studies' component? Some, but very few professors emphasize multicultural content in their courses. Students are hearing issues rather than specific content or skill modifying curriculum. The information is fragmented with certain issues such as language being addressed more than others. Also, the multicultural issues and content in the professional studies were not being assessed, even if chapters were included in the textbooks and if it was mentioned in the syllabi.

Conclusions and Implications for Future Research.

Thus far, most of what has been written about the infusion of multiculturalism across the curriculum in teacher education has been theory on the ideal level of Goodlad's model, and program descriptions on the formal level. As can be seen in this study, there is a lack of parallelism between the ideal and formal levels and the experiential level of curriculum as it relates to multiculturalism in the professional studies' courses. This mirrors the discontinuity found by Goodlad (1984) and his team of researchers when they studied curriculum in the secondary and elementary schools around the nation.

Many questions were raised during this study that warrant further investigation. On the ideal level, one of the theories which influences the policy of NCATE is education which is multicultural (EMC) (Grant, 1978). Specifically how does it work out in practice? How is it operationalized? What should be included in this infusion? Are there successful models of infusion that inform practice? Is it even possible to have EMC with the present predominant epistemology in the colleges of education across the nation?

On the perceived and operational levels of curriculum several questions are raised. How do teacher educators interpret the mandated curriculum to infuse? What does infusion mean to them? What role do teacher educators' beliefs and experiences play in the operationalization and practice of infusion?

Is there a way to encourage unity of approach to infusion in a teacher education program that would avoid fragmentation without threatening academic freedom?

Further research needs to be conducted on the experiential level of curriculum. More studies must be conducting which look at the curriculum from the students' perspective. Minimally, this study must be expanded and replicated before any of the preliminary assertions or findings can inform practice. Beyond the different levels of curriculum, this study raises questions about actual coursework in multicultural education. Such a course offered at the beginning of a teacher education program may provide a framework or lens for students to recognize and process multiculturalism infused in their other coursework. This is not to imply that students don't have any knowledge of multiculturalism except what they can learn in a specific course. Rather such a course appears to raise awareness. Research focusing on the placement of a course in multicultural education within the formal teacher education curriculum is suggested.

Perhaps the most disturbing finding in this study that demands our attention is the possibility that infused multiculturalism is not being assessed in classes. The issue of assessment is value-laden. It motivates students to learn what we as educators deem to be the most important information, what deserves focus, and what is expected as good performance. With no assessment occurring, we might as well not even be infusing. What we are saying in essence, is this knowledge is not worthy of our attention.

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